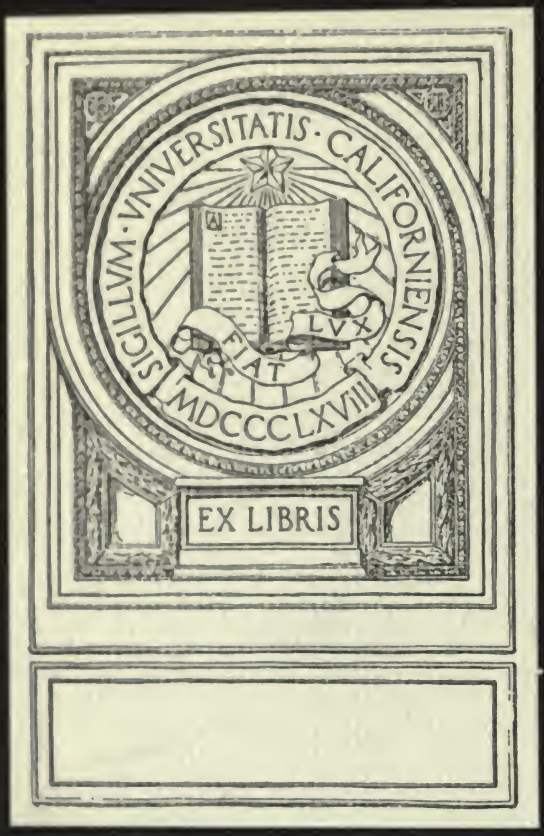
D A
3
C8S4

UC-NRLF
$B 748 040


SIGILLVM · VNIVERSITATIS · CALIFORNIENSIS
LVX
FIAT
MDCCCLXVIII
EX LIBRIS

THE BRITISH ACADEMY

William Cunningham

1849–1919

by

W. R. Scott.

[*From the Proceedings of the British Academy, Vol. IX*]

LIBRARY OF THE

London

Published for the British Academy
By Humphrey Milford, Oxford University Press
Amen Corner, E.C.

Price One Shilling and Sixpence net

DA 3
C954

UNIV. OF
CALIFORNIA

UNIV. OF CALIFORNIA

WILLIAM CUNNINGHAM

1849–1919

Is it one of the secrets of personality, that there are some characters which refuse to be classified, and that seem to defy analysis? To the merely superficial observer it may appear possible to force them into some mould or category, but one can scarcely avoid the conviction that, in this process, the finer meaning of the life has been lost. We may say of William Cunningham that he was the greatest historian of the social and economic life of England, but at the same time he was very much more. If one adds that he was an ecclesiastic, an active man of affairs, a politician, and a traveller, it is perhaps difficult to avoid producing the impression that in him there was a certain dispersion of energy. Yet this would be to assume that in all cases a man can make the best of himself by concentration. While that is so in the main, there are instances of an overflowing vitality which undoubtedly realizes itself in many-sided activities—the unity of such lives is only to be attained through diversity. There can be little doubt that Cunningham was one of these. As to the intensity of his energy, there can scarcely be difference of opinion. Any one who observed him closely could not fail to be impressed by the remarkable contrast between the man in repose and when aroused by some interest or emotion. His frame was powerful, with a face lightly bearded, such as one sees sometimes in the pictures of Scottish churchmen before the Reformation. But when he looked up his eyes had an intensity and brightness as if they were lit from within. Also he had the faculty, which is given to very few, of turning from one subject to another, and taking up the next interest at the point at which he had left it previously with full mental alertness. It was this power which enabled him to accomplish an immense amount of work in varied fields, and, at the same time, to appear always unhurried. It was another side of his character, or, perhaps more truly, a consequence of his qualities, that he was the last to decline controversy; rather one guesses that he met it halfway. Life to him was an endless striving, and if opposition was encountered it was to be overcome—*αἰεὶ γάρ τοι ἔρις τε φίλη*. Yet under it all was an intense devotion to the causes which he upheld. In him the passionate loyalty, which is so prominent in the Scottish

436407

character, was very marked. Had he lived in the first half of the eighteenth century it might be conjectured that he would have been a force among the Jacobites.

In the light of these clues as to the whole character and temper of the man it becomes possible to see the purpose and purport of his life. Perhaps more than most men he realized the fine saying of Plato—*Ὅπη γὰρ ἂν ἐπιθυμῇ καὶ ὁποῖός τις ὢν τὴν ψυχήν, ταύτῃ σχεδὸν ἑκάστοτε καὶ τοιοῦτος γίγνεται ἅπας ἡμῶν ὡς τὸ πολύ.*

Cunningham's Scottish ancestry had no little influence on his character and outlook on life. He was born at Edinburgh on December 29, 1849, the third son of James Cunningham, W.S., and Elizabeth Boyle, daughter of Alexander Dunlop of Keppoch. On both sides of his family there was a record of varied interests and of public work, the most notable names being those of Principal Dunlop, of Glasgow University, and of an earlier William Cunningham, a Colonel who fought in India under Wellington. His grandfather was a friend of Robert Burns, some of whose letters remain in the possession of the family. As a boy he was delicate, suffering much from recurring attacks of asthma. For this reason he was educated at home for a period by visiting masters. Becoming stronger, he was sent to the Edinburgh Institution in 1861 (where he remembered Dr. Ferguson as a stimulating teacher) and three years later to the Edinburgh Academy. Though unable to join fully in school life, he appreciated the *esprit de corps* of the Academy, and made many lasting friendships. Most of his holidays were spent at Gretna Hall, his father's summer residence. In view of the future, Cunningham's interest in rural life was significant. He became acquainted with agriculture and rural industry, just when the transition to machinery was beginning, and when the old customs, such as the kern supper, still survived. Gretna called forth his first literary effort, which consisted of a collection of tales relating to the district.

Cunningham, like so many of his contemporaries, went to the University at a comparatively early age, matriculating at Edinburgh in 1865. There he was most interested in the classes of Fraser, Blackie, and Tait. Though an Arts student, he attended classes in Chemistry, Comparative Anatomy, and Zoology. Apart from his class work, he was a member of the University Company of the Queen's Edinburgh Rifle Brigade, and of the Musical Society. In 1868 he went to Tübingen to study German, and this visit marked a turning-point in his career. His intention had been to enter the ministry of the Presbyterian Church, his father being a member of the Free Church. At Tübingen he took part with American friends

in reading the Book of Common Prayer, which attracted him through the sense of catholicity and historic continuity associated with liturgical forms of worship, and, on his return from Germany, he decided to enter the Church of England. Though this decision disappointed his father, the latter facilitated Cunningham in his change of plans. In other directions the visit to Tübingen left a permanent impression upon him. It influenced his conception of the State, and to it may be traced his tendency to emphasize order and discipline in social life. The same visit brought him into contact with the Milner family, and his early acquaintance with Lord Milner was afterwards renewed in consequence of a mutual friendship with Arnold Toynbee, and during the Tariff controversy.

In the year 1869 Cunningham entered Caius College, and, from that date till his death (with the exception of a few years spent in the north of England) he was closely associated with Cambridge. He read Moral Science, being particularly attracted by Sidgwick and Maurice. He was specially influenced by the latter, both as regards Theology and the treatment of social questions. As at Edinburgh, his interests were wide. He took part in the debates at the Union, served on the Committee, and held the various offices, including that of President. To his great joy, he found that rowing did not bring on asthma, and he rowed in the Lents and Mays in his first year. The next year his boat made the first bump ever recorded above the railway bridge, but he collapsed after the strain of the race, and thereafter his athletic activities were much restricted. Election to a Moral Science Scholarship at Trinity in 1872 caused him to migrate from Caius, but he continued his relations with friends there, and it was a source of much gratification to him later when he was elected to an honorary Fellowship at his first college. In the same year he was bracketed top in the Moral Science Tripos, dividing the honour with his great friend, Maitland. His dissertation on 'Descartes and his Influence on England' did not secure his election to a Fellowship. This was a great and lasting disappointment. His concentration on Philosophy had made him hope that he might find a career in this subject: but though he applied for several chairs on the subject, his only encouragement was an examinership at Edinburgh. In the long run, it was one of those disappointments which reserved his great energies for another field of work. And though, till the end of his life, he still wished for time to devote to Philosophy, his own words in a passage in *The Gospel of Work* explain the greater gain:—'A self-centred life would not be worth having, if we could attain it. . . . It is in accepting the ties that bind us to other men, and sub-

mitting to these limitations, that we can realize our true selves. . . . Every human being may find his life, by trying to play the part assigned him, even at the sacrifice of the capacities and tastes on which he prides himself most highly.'

The interval from 1872 to 1878 was one of varied experiences, in which one feels that Cunningham was seeking his life work. In 1870 he and Moore Ede, of St. John's, now Dean of Worcester, were sent by the University of Cambridge to organize the newly-formed scheme of University Extension lectures in Yorkshire. Cunningham lectured in Leeds, Bradford, and I think Saltaire. His subject was Political Economy and his lectures were well attended. There were also lectures on History and Literature. The success which attended these lectures largely contributed to the decision of the University of Leeds to add the Humanities to its curriculum, which had previously been confined to scientific and technical subjects. Cunningham took a leading part in organizing Sunday afternoon lectures for men in churches of towns in which University Extension lectures were held. This was at that time an entirely new departure. It drew many from the Secularist Halls and was by no means favourably regarded by Mr. Bradlaugh. One of Cunningham's lectures on the Bengal famine, in which he discussed the question of the beneficence of the Deity, was published. The following year the Cambridge Syndicate requested him to undertake the organization of University Extension work in Lancashire. He then settled at Liverpool, which he made his headquarters and where he remained for three years. During this period he acted as voluntary curate of St. Saviour's, Everton, where he was in charge of a district with a population of 5,000. In 1872 he had been offered a title for the following Trinity Ordinations by Dr. Pearson, of St. John's College, Vicar of Horningsea, a parish five or six miles from Cambridge. Here he renewed his acquaintance with agricultural and rural life, which he felt of real use to him later in his work in Cambridgeshire as Archdeacon of Ely.

In 1876 he married his first cousin, Adele Rebecca Dunlop, and he and his wife gave demonstrations of cookery which proved very attractive to considerable audiences. Side by side with his varied work, he came into contact with Labour and other allied movements, as, for instance, the Co-operative Congress at Halifax in 1874, and the Trades Union Congresses at Liverpool (1877) and at Edinburgh (1879). In this way he extended his knowledge of social questions by supplementing academic discussion through acquaintance at first hand with the workers.

In October 1878 Cunningham returned to Cambridge as assistant

secretary to G. F. Browne (afterwards Bishop of Bristol) in the organizing of local examinations and lectures. Soon afterwards he was appointed examiner in the History Tripos, which had been established three years earlier. In that Tripos a paper had been assigned to Political Economy and Economic History, but there was no one in residence who professed to teach the latter subject, and Cunningham undertook the work. Not long afterwards he was elected Chaplain at Trinity, and assisted as curate at Great St. Mary's Church. From 1879 to 1898 he acted as Cambridge correspondent to *The Guardian*, and reviewed many economic books for the *Cambridge Review*. In the winter of 1881–2 he visited India. This was the first of his longer expeditions. Later, he travelled to Italy (1887), to Germany and France (1897), to Sweden and the Hanse Towns (1906), to the United States (first as Lecturer on Economic History at Harvard in 1900, and again as Lowell Lecturer in 1914), to South Africa with the British Association (1905), and to the Holy Land (1911). After his return from India he found himself compelled to give up some of his work, and concentrated his activities more on his duties as Chaplain of Trinity and Lecturer in the University. The best of his time and thought was given to the study and teaching of Economic History, in which he was hampered by the want of a suitable text-book. While it was too often a national reproach that England is careless of her history, there was scarcely any department of the national life of which that reproach was more true than in relation to the economic development of the country. Though Adam Smith had availed himself freely of the historical method, it had been neglected during the next hundred years. It is significant that the section entitled 'History of Commerce' in McCulloch's *Literature of Political Economy* (1845) contains mention of histories of the trade of Carthaginians, Ethiopians, Egyptians, Venetians, Russians, the Levantine peoples, Florentines, and Spaniards, but the only general title relating to England, of any importance, is the *Annals of Commerce* of Anderson and McPherson. Between McCulloch and Cunningham there appeared Rogers's monumental *History of Agriculture and Prices to 1400* (1866), and Levi's *History of Commerce* (1872). Thus, it is not difficult to conceive the magnitude of the task with which Cunningham was confronted. A new field of study, as he planned it, had to be surveyed; and its fruitfulness must be demonstrated in the face of the traditions of the Classical School. Further, it was Cunningham's aim to give actuality to his work, by first-hand study of the writings of the men who recorded the changes of their times, in order to penetrate as far as

possible, behind their acts, into their minds and motives. Also his treatment of Economic History was purely British. While he was far from neglecting any sources made available by the students on the Continent, his investigation showed independence, and aimed at being a national history in the best sense. It was with these objects that *The Growth of English Industry and Commerce* was written, which was published in 1882. The title was happy, for the book itself was subject to growth. It first appeared as a single volume of some 500 pages, but this was no more than the foundation of what was destined to be an imposing structure. As Cunningham himself said, 'I had little idea at first of the wide range of the subject, or of the amount of time that must be spent in order to depict any incident in its proper colouring, and to draw their full significance from illuminating details.' By 1896 material had accumulated to such an extent that it became necessary to divide the whole work into two volumes, the first of which, dealing with the early and middle ages, was issued in 1890, and subsequent editions with further revisions and additions in 1896, 1905, and 1910. The second part, covering the modern period, appeared in 1892, and, in the later editions of 1903 and 1907, this in its turn was divided into two volumes. The work involved was enormous; for, on the one hand there were great stores of material to be examined, while on the other hand, as the subject became established, many monographs began to appear. The task would have been beyond the strength of any man, however energetic and enthusiastic, but Cunningham had the power of attracting collaboration and inspiring other workers with his own zeal. Miss Elizabeth Lamond was one of his early helpers, to whom he dictated a large part of the book in its original form. Later, Miss Lilian Tomm (now Dr. L. Knowles, of the London School of Economics) aided him in the study of sources, besides contributing the chapter on Lord Burleigh in later editions. Besides these, there were Miss Maud Sellers and Dr. E. A. McArthur, of whom the latter collaborated in the summary of the larger work issued as *Outlines of English Industrial History* (1895, 1904, 1910, 1913). In the course of his investigations, he greatly appreciated his meetings with Arnold Toynbee and Hubert Hall.

Up to 1882 Cunningham had published little. After that date his writings were numerous. One side of these activities consisted in developing his study of economic history. Not only were there frequent new editions of his *Growth of English Industry and Commerce*, each of which in all probability involved more labour than the writing of an entirely new book, but from time to time he printed mono-

graphs dealing in greater detail with some special aspect of the subject. Amongst these may be mentioned *Christian Opinion on Usury* (1884), *Use and Abuse of Money* (1891), *Modern Civilisation in some of its Economic Aspects* (1896), *Alien Immigrants to England* (1897), *Essay on Western Civilisation in its Economic Aspects, Ancient Times* (1898), *Mediaeval and Modern Times* (1900), *English Influence on the United States* (1916), *Progress of Capitalism in England* (1916). These volumes, though they represented an immense amount of work, were far from exhausting the list of his publications, but the remaining books belong to other phases of his many activities, which have yet to be narrated.

It will have appeared that the success of *The Growth of English Industry and Commerce* in the eighties had an important influence upon the course of Cunningham's literary work. But, at the time, he had several anxious decisions to make. He had been Birkbeck Lecturer and Hulsean Lecturer, the latter in 1885; and two years later he accepted with reluctance the duties of Vicar of Great St. Mary's, Cambridge. It seemed, at first, to involve the sacrifice of further research in economic history, while, on the other hand, it offered scope for his impulses to religious and social service, which would have been difficult to realize to a similar degree in a life of scholarship. From 1887 to 1908 was a time of great and varied activity. As Vicar of Great St. Mary's he interested himself in the restoration of the church. The tower was pointed and imperfect stones replaced. Glass was placed in the clerestory windows according to a scheme he drew up. A new choir organ and vestry were provided, while the North Chapel was fitted for use. It is possible that this close practical acquaintance with Church architecture originated the studies which resulted in the paper contributed to the *Transactions of the Academy* on 'The Mason's Craft in England'. He gladly acknowledged the valued help he received from Canon Slater, of St. Giles's Church, who was his ideal of a parish priest, and from Dr. Nairne, Fellow of Jesus College, who was his first curate. The Guildhall was in the parish of St. Mary's, and he frequently acted as Mayor's Chaplain. In 1881 he had been initiated as a Freemason, and he became Grand Chaplain of England. From 1901 to 1905 he was Proctor for the Clergy in Convocation, and took a great interest in the influence of the Church in social and political questions. He also endeavoured to secure an improvement in the financial position of the clergy, and took a leading part in the drawing up of the *Report of Committee of the Lower House of Convocation on Clerical Poverty* (1902).

Though a vicar, he had retained his College Lectureship, and, in addition, delivered lectures on religious subjects, i. e. the 'Comparative Study of Religion' and 'Christian and Unchristian Politics'. In 1891 he was elected Tooke Professor of Economics and Statistics at King's College, London, and was considering moving to London when his election to a Fellowship at Trinity resulted in his continuing to reside at Cambridge. He held his Professorship at London till 1897.

In addition to these various duties, Cunningham took an active part in congresses, meetings, and public affairs. He was one of those who started the Trinity College Mission at St. George's, Camberwell. He acted as Secretary of the Industrial Remuneration Conference, where he met Arthur Balfour, John Burns, Sir Charles Dilke, and Frederick Harrison. As far back as 1883 he had been a secretary of the Economic Science Section of the British Association, and he served in this capacity up to the time he was President of the Section at Cardiff in 1891. He was again President of the Section in 1905. He attended most of the meetings, and welcomed the opportunity of meeting both his contemporaries and the younger men. He was one of the original members of the British Academy, a contributor to the *Transactions*, and Chairman of the Section of the Political and Economic Sciences at the time of his death.

The South African War appealed to his sense of patriotism, and stimulated him to aid in evoking it amongst a people that had seemed to have become inert, and perhaps provincial. Both his bent of mind and his travels had made the British Empire very real to him, and he was one of the first to support the campaign of the late Joseph Chamberlain in favour of Imperial Preference. There followed several years of active controversy. At the meeting of the British Association at Southport he read a paper on the 'Failure of Free Traders to attain their Ideals' (printed in *Economic Review*, xiv, p. 39). This was followed by the *Rise and Decline of the Free Trade Movement* (1904), *The Wisdom of the Wise* (1906), *The Case against Free Trade* (1910). The most interesting aspect of this controversy was its effect on the edition of *The Growth of English Industry and Commerce in Modern Times*, which was in the press in 1903. The book had ended at 1850, but Cunningham added a 'Postscript' which in its original form was frankly polemical. It asserted that the *laissez faire* movement had been a failure, and went on to discuss the means by which that failure could be corrected, thereby ranging itself definitely on one side of the most acutely debated political controversy of the time. This method of treatment was open to the objection that the book had given no historical account of the movement which

the Postscript, in its original form, criticized. Indeed, it was curious that one of the opening sentences stated 'that it does not come easy to every one to hold himself severely aloof from the interests and sentiments of his own day, so that he can hope to form the dispassionate judgement which is possible in tracing the course of affairs in bygone times'. Some of his friends urged that the Postscript, as it stood, was unhistorical, and eventually he yielded, with some reluctance, to the extent of modifying it, so that it appeared as a statement of a tendency which had found expression at the beginning of the century, but without giving a final judgement on it.

In 1907 the offer of the Archdeaconry of Ely came as a complete surprise to him. It opened up a new sphere of work, though one that was of a somewhat indeterminate character. He remained Vicar of Great St. Mary's for about a year, and also of the neighbouring parish of St. Michael's, in order to effect a union of these parishes—a project which had been in contemplation since the sixteenth century. The discharge of his new duties as Archdeacon and those of Vicar of a combined parish, in which services had to be provided in two churches, involved very heavy work, and he owed much to the very efficient help he received in the parish from the Rev. A. H. Walker, Vicar of Sedbergh, then his curate. As Archdeacon he derived great satisfaction from that part of his duties which related to the care of the fabric of churches. During his period of office as Archdeacon a question was decided, which had been unsettled for some hundred years, as to the respective jurisdictions of the Bishop and Archdeacon in certain parishes. The boundaries of the Archdeaconry were rearranged, partly on this account, and partly in consequence of the erection of the new diocese of St. Edmundsbury and Ipswich. Several reforms were effected through his agency in the payment of fees, which were to the advantage of the clergy. It was a great pleasure to him to co-operate with the clergy in the Archdeaconry, by helping with the Sunday services; thus in the summer he sometimes took duty for one or two Sundays, to enable the incumbents to secure a much-needed holiday. Another side of his work was concerned with Convocation and Church Congresses. He was Secretary of Section B of the Pan-Anglican Congress of 1908, and the Jubilee Congress at Cambridge in 1911 made many claims upon his powers of organization. These and allied interests called for another series of works, viz.: *The Moral Witness of the Church on the Investment and Use of Wealth* (1909), *Christianity and Social Questions* (1910), *Causes of Labour Unrest* (1912), *Christianity and Economic Science*

(1914), *Report of Committee of Lower House of Convocation on Dilapidations* (1915), *Christianity and Politics* (1916).

After becoming Archdeacon, he still retained his rooms at Trinity, and it gave him much pleasure to entertain those who touched any of his numerous and wide interests. He had a passion for life and for discussion. Though he had ceased to lecture on Economic History he continued to do a certain amount of teaching designed to help men preparing for Holy Orders. He was Examining Chaplain to the Bishop of Peterborough from 1911. He had a long connexion with Girton College, and was, for some years, Chairman of the Council. It is to him that the College owes its Publication Fund, which has, as one of its objects, the giving a start to students by publishing their first book.

When he had been President of the Royal Historical Society (1911), and had completed his *Progress of Capitalism*, he himself regarded his historical work as closed. It may, however, be questioned whether the progress of events would not have caused him to return to it from time to time. In this connexion it is significant that, not very long before his death, he spoke of his great interest in the Board Meetings of the Cambridge University and Town Water Works Company, of which he had been elected a Director in 1912. His own scheme of work in the later years of his life was directed towards Philosophy and Theology, which he had started by contributing articles on F. D. Maurice to the *Ely Diocesan Gazette*, and he was contemplating a life of Maurice just before his death. There is a possibility that this material may be published in book form. The war brought great strain and personal grief to him. He had a serious illness in 1915, and he suffered much through the loss of his only son, who had come from abroad to join the Army, and who fell at Albert in March 1918. Still, in spite of personal sorrow, he found comfort in the thought that the principle of active patriotism (which he had advocated for many years) had found expression and development through the war. It was fitting that the last work published during his lifetime bore the title of *The Common Weal*, thereby summing up, as far as is possible in a single term, the essentials of the principles of citizenship for which he had long contended.

He died, after a short illness, on June 10, 1919, being the first of the Fellows of the Academy specially interested in economic questions to pass away. He is survived by his widow and daughter, both of whom shared his tastes, and the latter was his companion on several of his journeys.

W. R. Scott.

THIS BOOK IS DUE ON THE LAST DATE STAMPED BELOW

AN INITIAL FINE OF 25 CENTS
WILL BE ASSESSED FOR FAILURE TO RETURN THIS BOOK ON THE DATE DUE. THE PENALTY WILL INCREASE TO 50 CENTS ON THE FOURTH DAY AND TO $1.00 ON THE SEVENTH DAY OVERDUE.

JUL 8 1937
12Mar'52DH
27Feb52LU
DEC 1 0 1967 8 8
RECD
DEC 11'67-9 AM
LOAN DEPT.

LD 21–100m-8,'34

niversity Press

Makers
Syracuse, N. Y.
PAT. JAN. 21, 1908

436407

DA3
C8S4

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA LIBRARY